



Key messages on the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, 2015

Why is the legislation needed?

Alcohol misuse in Ireland is fueling a growing health and crime crisis that is costing us an estimated €3.7 billion a year in health, crime/public order and other ancillary costs, such as work-place absenteeism.

We as a country can no longer afford the current price of cheap alcohol – a woman can reach her low risk weekly drinking limit for €6.30 and a man for under a €10, the equivalent of around an hour's work on minimum wage.

Meanwhile, alcohol-related harms cost each tax payer in Ireland an estimated €3,318 a year. And that's just the financial cost:

- 88 deaths every month in Ireland are directly attributable to alcohol
- One in eleven children in Ireland say parental alcohol use has a negative effect on their lives – that is about 109,684 children
- There are 1,200 cases of cancer each year from alcohol in Ireland
- One in four deaths of young men aged 15-39 in Ireland is due to alcohol
- One in three road crash deaths is alcohol-related

How much are we really drinking?

- In 2014, the average Irish person aged 15+ drank 11 litres of pure alcohol, up from 10.73 in 2013. So far in 2015 the consumption level have increased again.
- 75% of all alcohol consumed in Ireland in 2013 was done so as part of a binge drinking session

- More than half (54%) of 18-75 year old drinkers were classified as harmful drinkers which equates to 1.35 million harmful drinkers in Ireland
- Almost 10 per cent of those who consume alcohol are dependent - and this rises to 15 per cent among 18-24 year olds
- The World Health Organisation's Global status report on alcohol and health 2014 found that 39% of all Irish people aged 15-years-old and over had engaged in binge drinking, or "heavy episodic drinking", in the past 30 days. This puts Ireland just behind Austria (40.5%) at the top of the 194 countries studied and well ahead of our neighbours in Britain (28%)
- OECD figures show how alcohol consumption in Ireland almost trebled over four decades between 1960 (4.9 litres) and 2000 (14.2 litres)
- Irish adults binge drink more than adults in any other European country, with 44 per cent of drinkers stating that they binge drink on a regular basis
- The highest proportion of binge drinkers is in the 18-29 age group. Young people are also more likely to exceed the weekly low-risk limit for alcohol consumption

What is low risk drinking:

- For drinking to be considered low risk, the HSE advises that adult women should drink less than 11 standard drinks per week and adult men should drink less than 17 standard drinks per week
- 1 standard drink contains 10g of pure alcohol is the equivalent to half a pint of lager, or a pub measure of spirits of a small glass of wine.

What measures does the Bill contain?

- The Bill will provide for the introduction of minimum unit pricing
- Regulation of the marketing and advertising of alcohol
- Health labelling of alcohol
- The separation of the sale of alcohol from everyday groceries in mixed trading premises

What is Minimum Unit Pricing?

- MUP is a floor price beneath which alcohol cannot be sold
- It is able to target the cheapest alcohol relative to its strength because the price is determined by and directly proportionate to the amount of alcohol in the drink.
- E.g. A standard bottle of wine contains 8 units of alcohol. If a MUP of €1 is put on alcohol, then a bottle of wine cannot be sold for less than €8.
- E.g. An average can of beer contains 2 units of alcohol, therefore a can of beer cannot be sold for less than €2.
- MUP will have no impact on low risk drinkers, it will targeted at the harmful high risk drinkers who generally seek to get as much alcohol as they can for as little money. It will also protect young people, who generally have the least disposable income and have the highest prevalence of binge drinking
- MUP will not affect the price of alcohol in pubs, clubs and restaurants, as alcohol is sold above the MUP in these premises. It will only impact on the cheapest alcohol sold in the off-trade.



Alcohol and Cancer:

- Alcohol has been classified as carcinogenic and linked to 7 types of cancer. The European Cancer Code says there is no 'safe' level. The more you drink, the higher your risk of cancer.
- One in 10 cancers in men and one in 33 in women are caused by drinking
- The projected number of new cases of alcohol-related cancers in the Republic of Ireland is expected to double by the year 2020 for women and to increase by 81% for men during the same period.
- 900 people are diagnosed with alcohol-related cancers and around 500 people die from these disease every year, according to the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP).
- Because alcohol consumption is higher among poorer people, their risk for alcohol-related cancers is also higher
- Alcohol can cause cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, pancreas, bowel and breast.
- There is a risk relationship between the amount a woman drinks, and the likelihood of her developing the most common type of breast cancer. Drinking one standard alcoholic drink a day is associated with a 9% increase in the risk of developing breast cancer, while drinking 3-6 standard drinks a day increases the risk by 41%
- Ireland has the second highest cancer rate in the world. Regular alcohol consumption is listed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) as one of the factors contributing to the high cancer rates.

Alcohol and Young people:

- Harmful drinking in Ireland is highest among 18-24 year old age group at 75%

- Dependent drinking in Ireland is highest among 18-24 year old age group at 15%
- Irish children reported drinking more per drinking occasion than most other European children of the same age
- 9% of girls surveyed and 13% of the boys said they first got drunk at or before the age of 13
- Irish 16 to 17-year-olds spend an average of €20·09+ per week on alcohol. This amounts to an illegal alcohol market of €145m in this country
- Just under half of all 6th year students and over 60% of young adults report excessive drinking, according to a survey of mental health and young people
- The average age of first alcohol use for children born in 1990 was 14 – in 1980, it was 15
- Because the brain is still developing, drinking in adolescence has the potential to cause detrimental long-term effects